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CITY COUNCIL APPROVES MEASURE TO FURTHER SUPPORT SMALL BUSINESSES OWNED AND OPERATED BY PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

City Council today approved a measure introduced by Mayor Rahm Emanuel, Alderman Carrie Austin, Alderman Matt O'Shea and Alderman Gilbert Villegas that further incentivizes contractors to use Business Enterprises owned by People with Disabilities (BEPD).

"The City of Chicago is committed to ensuring small businesses of all kinds are supported and have the opportunity to thrive," said Mayor Emanuel. "I commend Chief Procurement Officer Rhee for her dedication to putting policies in place that will ensure the businesses doing work for the City of Chicago reflect the City's rich diversity."

The ordinance introduced today amends sections 2-92-337 and 2-92-586 of the Municipal Code to enhance the BEPD program, which is a certification aimed at stimulating the use of small businesses owned and operated by persons with disabilities.

"Under the leadership of Mayor Emanuel, we at DPS are committed to assisting all businesses in their goals of increasing capacity," said Chief Procurement Officer Jamie L. Rhee. "The expansion of the BEPD program further empowers the vendor community with options to make them more competitive when bidding on City work."

The current incentive encourages prime contractor to utilize BEPDs to receive a bid incentive on a future bid. This amendment will make the incentive applicable to a current bid, and double the amount of the incentive from a maximum of two percent to a maximum of four percent. In addition, service-disabled veterans will be eligible to be certified as BEPDs. These changes are being proposed to make the incentive more attractive for prime contractors and more beneficial for the BEPDs.

"This initiative is critical to our work advancing contracting and economic opportunities for disabled owned businesses across the City of Chicago," said Karen Tamley, Commissioner of the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities.

“This ordinance will help BEPD certified firms become more competitive and earn more work, and I strongly support this proposal,” said Alderman Austin.

“People with disabilities are valued members of both the business community and our City as a whole, and I’m pleased to support this measure that will better help them become more represented among City contractors,” said Alderman O’Shea.

“Mayor Emanuel and Chief Procurement Officer Rhee have shown their commitment to ensuring that City contractors reflect the diversity of our great City; this measure ensures that businesses run by those with disabilities and businesses that employ individuals with disabilities have a better opportunity to participate in City business,” said Alderman Villegas.

For individuals and businesses interested in being certified as a BEPD, the for-profit corporation must be 51 percent or more owned or operated by one or more persons with disabilities. A non-profit may also be certified as a BEPD if it employs people with disabilities, pays at least minimum wage and whose management and daily business operations are controlled by one or more persons with disabilities and they directly or indirectly serve persons with disabilities. The entity must also be located in one of the following Illinois counties: Cook, DuPage, Kane, Will, Lake or McHenry.

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